

USDA Releases Interpretive Report on Nutrient Management at U.S. Dairies

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, through its National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS), released an interpretive report entitled *Nutrient Management and the U.S. Dairy Industry in 2002*. The report was compiled from data collected during the Dairy 2002 study. The report takes an in-depth look at nutrient management practices on U.S. dairy farms. APHIS is providing copies of the report to producers and industry stakeholders across the country.

In 1991, NAHMS conducted the National Dairy Heifer Evaluation Project (NDHEP). Through this project, NAHMS published baseline information on heifer health, illnesses and management practices, as well as prevalence estimates for *Cryptosporidium*, *Escherichia coli* 0157:H7 and *Salmonella*.

The NAHMS' Dairy '96 study built on the results of the NDHEP. Objectives of the Dairy '96 study included estimating the national prevalence of *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis* (Johne's disease), bovine leukosis virus, and fecal shedding of *E.coli* 0157 and *Salmonella* in adult dairy cows.

The NAHMS' Dairy 2002 study continued to address issues important to the U.S. dairy industry, which included changes in baseline dairy cattle health and management practices; strategies to address Johne's disease; management factors associated with the presence of certain food safety pathogens; preparedness of producers to respond to foreign animal diseases; and a profile of animal waste handling systems used on U.S. dairy operations.

A few highlights from *Nutrient Management and the U.S. Dairy Industry in 2002* are as follows:

- Bulk tank somatic cell counts (BTSCCs) are commonly used to ascertain the overall udder health of a dairy herd. There does not appear to be a correlation between manure handling methods and overall udder health, as measured by BTSCCs. Operations reporting BTSCCs of less than 400,000 used gutter cleaner and alley scraper as primary manure handling methods. Gutter cleaner was the primary manure handling method for the majority (46.8 percent) of operations with BTSCCs of 400,000 or more.

- The majority (49.3 percent) of small operations (less than 100 head) stored manure as a solid in a manure spreader; 35.8 percent of medium operations (100 to 499 head) stored manure in liquid form as slurry or liquid manure stored in an earth basin and not treated and 28.8 percent of large operations (500 or more head) stored manure in liquid form as slurry or liquid manure stored in an earth basin and not treated, while 24.2 percent of large operations used a treatment lagoon as a waste storage system.
- More than 5 out of 10 large operations analyzed manure for nutrient content, compared to approximately 4 out of 10 medium operations and less than 2 out of 10 small operations.
- The majority of large operations (52.9 percent) reported that the minimum distance manure was applied from a body of water was 1,000 feet or more. For medium operations, 28.9 percent reported a minimum distance of less than 100 feet, 29.4 percent a minimum distance of 100 to 499 feet and 35.3 percent reported a minimum distance of 1,000 feet or more.
- Roughly half of large and medium operations (55.8 percent and 48.4 percent, respectively) had written nutrient management plans, compared to only 23.3 percent of small operations.
- During the Dairy 2002 study—and prior to the EPA's revised Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) regulations—the majority of large operations (55.3 percent) believed that their operations would be classified as a CAFO. In contrast, 28.4 percent of medium operations and 42.2 percent of small operations reported that they had never heard of a CAFO. In addition, 37.8 of medium operations and 33.4 percent of small operations believed that their operations would most likely not be classified as a CAFO.

To request copies of the *Nutrient Management and the U.S. Dairy Industry in 2002* report or access future reports on APHIS' veterinary services Web site, go to <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ceah/cahm>.

Note to Stakeholders: Stakeholder announcements and other APHIS information are available on the Internet. Go to the APHIS home page at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov> and click on the "Nes" button. For additional information on this topic, contact Suzan Holl (301) 734-6464 or suzan.holl@aphis.usda.gov.

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